



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
Nashville District

# DistrictDigest

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## Nickajack Lock Continues Tradition of Service

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Photos by Bill Peoples



## On the Cover

Gordon Miller, mechanic, Nickajack Lock, uses a dial indicator to check for movement in the anchor bars of the riverwall upper miter gate. The lower picture shows Miller in the confined space of quoin area of the miter gate as he prepares to take these reading, which are done monthly as part of the preventative maintenance schedule of the lock.

## DistrictDigest

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# Thoughts From The Trail...



Hello Nashville, Summer is flying by — our kids are already in school and preseason football is almost over. Don't know about you, but I'm not ready for summer to end.

There are several points I want to discuss this month in the *Digest*, the first being safety. This past month, our Construction-Operations team safely completed another dewatering event, this time at Wheeler Lock. They again handled a high-risk operation with professionalism and skill. What's clear to me is that our folks never fail to plan and execute for tough and potentially dangerous situations. On the other hand, the District has lately experienced a dramatic rise in vehicle accidents involving our GSA fleet. We've been fortunate *so far* in that nobody's been seriously injured. Nevertheless, the accidents concern me because, from what I've seen, each one was preventable. So, my challenge to you is to give routine activities, driving in particular, the same level of attention that you give to "higher risk" activities. Put it in the back of your mind that vehicle accidents are rising in the District and commit to not being the next one...buckle-up, look before you pull out or back up, and remove obstructions to your vision.

At the end of my column last month, I asked those in the District HQ to respond to a survey concerning parking here in downtown Nashville. Approximately 250 of you responded to the survey, the results of which we hope to include in next month's *Digest*. While I don't yet have a formal analysis of the results, I did get to review your responses and noticed one issue raised far more than any other—that being, why can't we move the District HQ to J. Percy Priest or Old Hickory? I'd like to address this since I'm frequently asked this question.

There are actually several reasons why the District HQ, as a whole, can't move to a project site. First, we don't have facilities at J. Percy Priest or Old Hickory that can house the entire District. Yes, there is some excess capacity at these projects and we plan to make use of it where it makes sense, for Regulatory

Branch for instance. Once Regulatory's move is completed this fall, we'll examine whether other offices or portions thereof can be moved into the remaining space that's there.

The logical follow-on question to not having enough space at J. Percy Priest or Old Hickory is why don't we construct a new building? Unfortunately, we don't have the authority (permission and funding) to construct a new HQ. As a matter of policy, the Corps, like most federal agencies, is required to use the General Services Administration (GSA) to obtain office space in urban areas like Nashville. There are policy requirements for federal agencies to be housed together and to be located in a city's central business district and using GSA enables us to comply with these guidelines. Further, from a business perspective, the Corps doesn't want to own office buildings. The use of the GSA-leased space provides us with flexibility in that we can add or relinquish space when needed simply by providing notice to GSA. The requirement for Corps Districts to use GSA-leased space instead of Corps-owned space has been periodically reaffirmed by our headquarters, most recently in 1998.

The bottom-line is that the District will be headquartered here in downtown Nashville for the foreseeable future. We'll continue to explore options to maximize use of our local projects and we'll continue to improve the work environment here at the District HQ. A few examples of this already underway include the renovated space and new furniture for Planning, Construction, LM, EEO, and portions of Engineering Division. We'll also continue to press GSA to provide quality in terms of services—cleanliness, air quality, and security. Where necessary, we'll augment their services with our own efforts—our own air sampling, carpet cleaning, etc.

One final point I should make with regard to our office environment is that I've charged the division and office chiefs to conduct a fall clean up in next few weeks. I'm convinced that, in certain offices, we lose at least 20 percent of our space simply due to clutter. I ask for your



support when the clean up is scheduled for your division or office.

One piece of good news I received several weeks ago was that Nashville was selected to represent both the Corps of Engineers and Department of the Army at the Blacks in Government Conference held in Washington D.C. in late August. Our selection for this prestigious award is recognition for our efforts to improve diversity within the District, specifically for having the "best practices" for the Black Employment Program. Warren Bennett, our Chief of Geotech in Engineering, and Carol Haynes, from EEO, will represent us at this conference and they'll make presentations on our efforts with the Advancing Minority Interest in Engineering Program and our partnership with Tennessee State University. There are many folks who deserve credit for our receipt of this award—Warren Bennett, Marva Morris, Carol Haynes, Dennis Williams, Sue Croffutt, John Case, Tim McCleskey, Todd Duncan, Tom Waters, Harold Boswell, LaNita Bonds, and Charles Appleton. To all of you, I say well done and many thanks. You have and will continue to make a difference for the District.

By now, I'm sure that you've heard that the District experienced a major and unexpected loss earlier this month with the passing of our Deputy Chief of Emergency Management, Al Dunn. Al served in EM for 18 years and was clearly one of our most beloved employees. He will be missed by all though we're all better off for having had the chance to know and work with him.

If you see Craig Shoe or Jeff Flowers, pass along your congratulations for their

**Continued on Page 11**  
**See Thoughts from the Trail**





**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Photo**  
Corps employees and AE contract workers preparing for a boat inspection of the constructed foreshore dikes along the Cumberland riverbank in the Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge.



**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Photo**  
View of the three-year-old constructed foreshore dike along the left bank of the Cumberland River, which is part of \$14.7 million project to protect shoreline along the Cumberland River within the Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge.



**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Photo**  
The most recently constructed foreshore dike along the left bank of the Cumberland River is shown. The entire protection project is six years ahead of schedule.

# Cross Creeks Riverbank Protection almost Complete

by Bill Peoples

**T**he Riverbank Protection project along the Cumberland River in the Cross Creeks National Wildlife Refuge will be completed next year, protecting the habitat, which is a major wintering area for migratory waterfowl and other species of migratory birds. The \$14.7 million project is six years ahead of schedule because of the initiative of Nashville District team members taking advantage of new contracting procedures, additional funding and customer feedback.

"We were able to be prepared with the requirements contract and the design we already had in place to award additional contracts during Fiscal Year 1998, 1999 and 2000 when money became available at the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division," said Dimitra Syriopoulou, project manager for the Cross Creeks Riverbank Protection project. "Out of the total project cost of \$14.7 million, \$13 million was for construction costs. In FY 98, 99, and 2000, we were able to execute additional funding to put the project ahead of schedule. This fiscal year we were able to receive almost \$7 million in construction funds more than was scheduled, which amounted to what was programmed for the final three fiscal years of the project."

The requirements contract for stone protection (rip rap) with Choctaw Construction was the primary reason the project was able to move ahead of schedule. This type of pre-placed contract gives the District flexibility to move quickly when funds become available. This specific contract sets a unit price for rip rap and specifics areas on the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers within which this pricing can be used. The Cross Creeks area is one of the areas included in the contract. Since the requirements contract was in place and the design completed, each year when additional money became available the Cross Creeks project was able to use it.

"We were able to work well with Choctaw," said Syriopoulou. "When we had different areas where we thought

initially we would do one type of stabilization and then we had to change, they were flexible and accommodating enough to do that quickly. Also as funds became available, they were able to come in and complete more of the work."

Team members from the Construction Branch also moved the project along as they oversaw the construction of the project. "Construction Branch has done a superb job," said Syriopoulou, "making changes in the field to meet the customer's requests and supervising the contractor."

Another area which has impacted the swiftness of the project was the close cooperation between the Corps and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service who manages Cross Creeks. When the customer had suggestions to modify the design and protect more of the area with stone instead of bioengineering, the District listened and modified the design.

## Revolutionize Effectiveness

"I commend the Corps for the enormous amount of riverbank protection work accomplished so far," said Walter H. Nesbitt, assistant refuge manager, Cross Creeks Wildlife Management Area. "Stone riverbank protection work accomplished in the last two years has stabilized 10.98 miles of these fragile banks. Some of the forty-three archeological sites within the project have been protected. Shoreline erosion had exposed numerous sites. As these archeological sites became visible to the public, artifacts were illegally removed by looters and artifact collectors. Stone protection already laid over several sites has halted erosion and stopped the digging for Native American artifacts."

Cross Creeks, established in 1962, is the mitigation for the loss of the Kentucky Woodlands Refuge, which was inundated by the construction of Lake Barkley. The purpose of the Refuge is to provide feeding and resting habitat for migratory waterfowl. A system of dikes and water control structures make it possible to regulate water levels to create wetlands

**Continued on Page 15**  
**See Cross Creeks**

# Training and Career Development Begin With the Individual

By Bill Peoples

The Training Program in the Nashville District continues to have as its goal enhancing individual job performance through training opportunities with an emphasis on meeting the District's mission. As science and technology evolve, as new management practices are established and as new operational and maintenance procedures are developed, training is required to keep up with these changes. Everyone in the District should know a few facts about training and how to obtain training.

"First, let me say that training is everyone's responsibility," said Tom Waters, chief, Engineering Division and chairman, Training Committee, Nashville District. "It is the responsibility of the employee, the supervisor and on up the chain. Like many Districts we have a Training Committee that sets district-wide priorities and allocates funds for training and recommends an annual District Training Plan to the Commander."

## Invest in People

The training cycle starts with the individual and their Individual Development Plan (IDP), ENG Form 5055-R. It is a five-year plan, which is developed by the individual in coordination with his or her supervisor. The supervisor should actively participate in this process with the employee and review and approve the plan.

"The IDP is the foundation and should be updated at least annually at performance appraisal time," said Christine Rossi, chief, Management Analysis Branch, who manages the Training Program for the Nashville District. "The IDP serves as a training roadmap for the employee and supervisor for professional development. I think in many instances these IDPs are not being done, which is shortchanging the employee."

The IDP identifies courses that the employee should take during the next training year and allows career planning for the next five years. The next step

occurs in May of each year when the Training Needs Survey is sent out. This survey goes to managers and supervisors and includes a funding target for each division or office for training for the next training year. Supervisors should in turn ask their team members for the specific courses from their IDP for the next year and identify the dates, vendors and costs. The training needs are approved by each of the Division and Office Chiefs, then rolled-up for the entire District by the Management Analysis Branch and presented to the Training Committee.

"The Training Committee reviews the survey and approves the training needs for the District," said Waters. "What many folks don't understand is how we come up with the funding allocations for each section. Our training budget is based on one and a half percent of our base labor costs, which for the Nashville District amounts to about \$500,000. We take off the top the costs for certain types of training which cross organizational lines in the District, such as the Leadership Development Program and EAGLE programs. Each organization is allocated their prorated share of the net training budget. This budget is based on tuitions only. The District also incurs all costs for travel, per diem and labor. The budget also does not address most conferences and seminars which many employees attend each year. When you include travel, per diem and labor for scheduled training and include conferences, the total dollars spent on training by the District is a very large number."

The LDP and EAGLE programs cost about \$75,000 a year. These costs are distributed across the District Training budget.

"I think if you ask any LDP or EAGLE graduate or participant about the value of the program they will tell you it is well worth the cost," said Waters. "The graduates of these programs understand better how the District works across technical disciplines and in the field. They are also involved in courses and projects that enhance their leadership and team



building skills. We get back an employee who is able to take this new knowledge and these new skills and have an immediate impact on the performance of the District."

One area the Training Committee has placed more emphasis on during the last couple of years is the Tuition Assistance Program, which will pay tuition costs for courses related to an employee's job. The employee takes these courses on their own time at local colleges and universities or by distance learning methods.

"This program is a win/win for the District and the employee, and we want more people to take advantage of this program," said Rossi. "This program allows the District to pay for courses, which enhance an employee's job skills. It is the supervisor who recommends this program, so if you can convince your supervisor that a particular course will enhance your job performance in almost all instances the Training Committee will approve it."

Federal law stipulates that tuition assistance cannot be used to obtain a degree, only for courses that help individuals do their job better.

"Although this program is not designed to fund a degree program, many folks are able to use it to help pay for an undergraduate or graduate degree program," said Waters. "You, working with your

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**See Training**

# Regulatory Manages Program to Protect the Environment

by Bill Peoples

**T**he Regulatory Branch of the Nashville District has a reputation for its expertise and execution of the regulatory program for the District, processing more than 3,000 permit actions a year. This reputation is based on years of hard work and dedication to protecting the environment.

"One of our goals is to be fair and reasonable," said Ron Gatlin, chief, Regulatory Branch. "When our folks are going out and someone may have done something unauthorized, I tell our people to put yourself in their shoes. Another goal is administer the program in an efficient manner. A third goal is to protect the aquatic environment. As we do our job, we want to keep all those goals in mind."

The Regulatory Program of the Corps began in the 1890s in order to protect navigable waters. It was authorized by Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbor Act of 1899.

"Before 1970, basically any work taking place in the navigable waters of the United States required a permit from the Corps," said Gatlin. "In the 1970s, the program changed dramatically because of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) of 1969 and in 1972 the Congress enacted the Federal Water Pollution Act, known as the Clean Water Act. The Clean Water Act required a permit for discharge of dredge and fill material in the waters of the United States. Today if you are doing any work in any water you need to contact the Corps because you may need a permit."

The Clean Water Act expanded the regulatory program from mainly navigable waters to all waters in the U.S. This expansion means today that even streams or wetlands or isolated waters located on private property, which can be tied to interstate commerce are also regulated by the Corps.

"Now we deal with the farmer out here who has had this farm in his family for two

hundred years and wants to re-locate a stream," said Gatlin. "He has to get a permit from the Corps to do that. It is a challenging program, and we really have to take in consideration the customer's feelings."

The Regulatory Branch is organized into two sections: an Eastern Regulatory Section and a Western Regulatory Section. Each section has a Field Office under it. The Eastern Field Office is located in Lenoir City, Tenn. and the Western Field Office is in Decatur, Ala. There are 27 team members in the Branch. The Branch has a good mix of disciplines from engineers to biologists to water quality experts, which means team members can draw from the different expertise in the Branch to solve problems. Team members also coordinate with other sections in the District Office and others outside the District to use their expertise in the permit process. Some sections they routinely coordinate with include: Planning, Navigation, and Hydraulics and Hydrology, Real Estate and Natural Resource. Project managers and regulatory specialists in the branch and field offices handle the permitting process, according to Gatlin.

## Revolutionize Effectiveness

"On the Tennessee River, we have a unique situation where TVA regulates activities on that river system, but we also regulate those activities, including even private small docks," said Gatlin. "On the Cumberland River system, the resource managers at our projects authorize docks under Title 36. On both rivers, we regulate discharge of dredge or fill material, dredging, and other activities. We work hand-in-hand with our resource managers, rangers and TVA."

The regulatory boundaries and the District's geographic boundaries differ with Nashville District's regulatory boundaries only covering a small area of Virginia, and not including North Carolina or Georgia, but generally following the rest of the civil works boundaries, according to Gatlin. The eastern and western sections

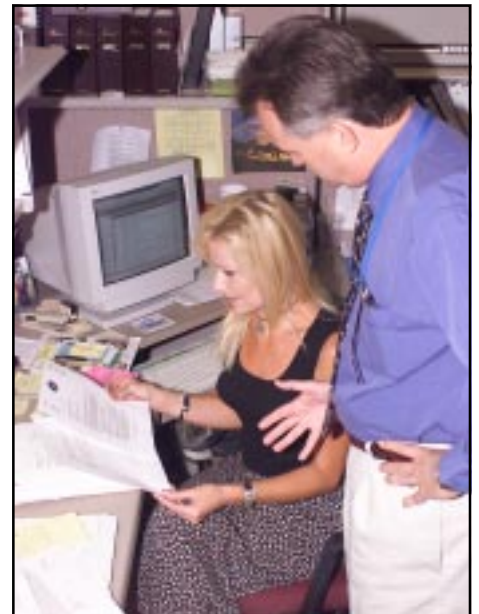


Photo by Bill Peoples

**Amy Robinson (seated), project manager, Western Regulatory Section, and Ron Gatlin, chief, Regulatory Branch, discuss a permitting action for a project in North Alabama.**

split at about Carthage, Tenn.

The field offices' staffs work closely with their respective sections to ensure compliance with the Regulatory Program. In addition to compliance inspections, field staffs also do enforcement activities, handle the nationwide and regional permits and assist with individual permits, according to Gatlin.

Nationwide permits allow the Regulatory Branch to expedite certain types of permit applications, which reduces workload in order to spend more time on complex permits. In the last two years, Nationwide Permit 26 has been replaced.

"The Nationwide permit use to be a simple tool that we used to manage the workload," said Brad Bishop, project manager and Nationwide Permit project manager for the Nashville District. "They have now become pretty complicated. Before, you could determine quickly if an application was under a nationwide. Now, you have to really look at it closely."

**Continued next page**





**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Photo**  
**Mary Ann Landrum (left), regulatory specialist, Eastern Regulatory Office, and Cathy Elliott (right), manager, Eastern Regulatory Office, looking for hydric soil indicators within a wetland.**

#### **Continued from Page 6**

Recent changes in new nationwide permits may ultimately increase workload. "Because of the changes in the new Nationwide permits, making them more restrictive, we anticipate the number of individual permits to increase, and these are the major ones that take more time and more coordination" said Gatlin. "In the past we have been able to use our field office staff to process most of the nationwide permits, thereby letting our project managers concentrate on individual permits. If the Nationwide permits cannot be used, we do think the amount of individual permits will be going up and create an additional workload for us."

The regulatory process includes application for a permit, an information gathering phase, a Public Notice, possibly a public hearing, an Environmental Assessment, other studies and coordination as necessary and a decision on the permit. If a permit is issued, compliance inspections are normally made throughout the construction period to insure the applicant is following the conditions of the permit. The standard time frame for permit processing is 120 days.

"After I receive everything from an applicant that I need, I issue a public notice," said Amy Robinson, project manager, Western Regulatory Section. "The public notice is out for 30 days. Within those 30 days, we receive com-

ments from the public and any interested parties, which might be other federal agencies, state agencies and local government. We send a letter to anyone who had objections stating that those objections will be taken into consideration when making the decision. We then forward those objections to the applicant so that they can respond to them. The next step would be a public hearing if one were needed. We have to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA), if there is a public hearing we have to

prepare a draft EA before the hearing. A decision is then made on the permit.

"If a permit is issued," said Robinson, "we do compliance inspections throughout the project to ensure that the conditions of the permit are being followed. Our standard permits are normally issued within 120 days, unless something like a hearing or an additional study extends the time."

One of the most challenging parts of the regulatory is enforcing the laws and regulations especially when a private land owner may be in violation. Regulators have to follow-up on unauthorized activities and learn to use diplomacy in carrying out this part of their duties, according to John Case, chief, Western Regulatory Section.

"Enforcement activities are challenging," said Cathy Elliott, manager, Eastern Regulatory Field Office. "Going on private property and telling someone they can't do what they want to do without a permit is difficult. We do this on a routine basis, but it is never easy. When we discover a violation, we also try to explain what the property owner has to do to come into compliance and work with them to do that."

One new feature of the regulatory program is an appeals process for permits that have been denied. Previously if your permit was denied,

the only recourse was to sue the Corps. Now customers can appeal to the Division office and the Division Engineer can remand the case back to the District for re-look at part of the permit. The appeal is based only on the administrative record, according to Gatlin.

Wetlands are one of the areas, which the Regulatory Branch oversees, and have become more controversial in the past few years. A wetland serves several purposes including: absorbing pollutants, serving as an excellent habitat for fish and wildlife; and in flood plains, providing flood storage capacity.

"We probably have more wetlands in the western area, especially along the Tennessee River in Alabama," said Case. "Although there is not a lot of development in these areas now, there is the potential to have a lot of wetland impacts, which we have to continually monitor."

Although the job of regulating wetlands, rivers, streams and other waters is complex, the Nashville District Regulatory Branch team is dedicated to doing this job well and believes in giving high quality service to its customers and to the Nation, according to Case.

"I love the variety of projects we have, working with a variety of people and the field work," said Robinson. "I get a lot of satisfaction from being able to help an applicant minimize environmental impact and to see a project where the work is done right and that actually benefits others. There is nothing boring about regulatory. It is a great place to work. We have a great bunch of people in the branch that are great to work with." □



**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Photo**  
**Ken Jones, regulatory specialist, Eastern Regulatory Office, does a jurisdictional determination of a possible wetland.**

# Nickajack Lock Continu

*Story and Photos by Bill Peoples*

**N**ickajack Lock and Dam were completed in 1967 with a lift of 39 feet, and is second youngest lock on the Tennessee River. Located at mile 424.7 of the Tennessee River, they replaced what were the first dam, lock and hydroelectric power plant on the Tennessee River, Hales Bar, completed in 1913.

Some of the original parts and tools from Hales Bar are today in use at Nickajack. The remains of the Hales Bar power plant and lock can be seen to the north from the Interstate 24 Bridge as it crosses the Tennessee River near Exit 158.

"Hales Bar Dam was six miles up the river and it was built during the 1910s," said Jim Nelson, lockmaster, Nickajack Lock. "It was built on loose shale, and they could not get it to quit leaking, water flowing underneath it. TVA decided to build a new lock and dam downstream. The new lock and dam were named Nickajack because of the nearby town of Nickajack and the Nickajack cave located nearby."

## Seek Growth Opportunities

About \$5 million tons of cargo a year pass through Nickajack Lock. Most of the cargo now is grain, lumber, asbestos, chemicals and petroleum products. In the past, coal was a major commodity going through the lock. Occasionally, a riverboat such as the Delta Queen comes by and creates quite a stir for local residents, according to Nelson.

"We are at about 20 percent capacity," said Floyd Hudson, Nickajack Lock operator. "When they stopped mining coal in the

area a few years ago, our traffic dropped some, but has been pretty steady for the last couple of years. The bottleneck is at Chickamauga Lock. If they ever build a new lock there, I think our traffic here would pick up considerably."

Although the lock is not operating at full capacity, it still takes a full crew of ten persons to operate and maintain it, according to Hudson.

"The lock is in pretty good shape," said Nelson. During the last dewatering in 1998, we did not find any significant damage or maintenance problems."

The most striking feature about Nickajack Lock is the unfinished 800-foot main chamber, so all traffic passing through Nickajack is going through the 600-foot auxiliary chamber. The construction on the main chamber was stopped because of budget problems, according to Nelson.

"During construction, the main lock chamber was left unfinished," said Nelson. "They brought it up out of the water so they could finish it at a later date. Here it is 33 years later, and TVA is permanently plugging the valve culverts, so right now there are no future plans to finish it. The temporary bridge built to reach the auxiliary chamber is still here. I guess we should stop calling it 'temporary.' The unfinished chamber really doesn't affect operations; it's just a little farther to get to

everything we work on. There has been talk about possibly using it as a dry dock."

The steel bulkheads in the culverts have been holding back water for 33 years and recently TVA decided to permanently seal them for safety reasons.

"If the bulkheads fail there is no way to block the water off or to stop the flow from draining the lake," said Nelson. "They are plugging the culverts with concrete so that if the bulkheads ever did fail it wouldn't matter. The bulkheads still look good after being in there for 33 years, but this is a precautionary measure."

One reason for the condition of the lock is its design, which uses a series of holes in the walls to fill the chamber. The design disperses the water around the lock.

"There are 282 one-foot wide holes in each wall, which are used to fill the chamber," said Hudson. "The design makes this the smoothest filling and emptying lock I have ever seen. Also, with this system the lock fills and empties quickly in about ten minutes. I think this design has a lot to with the good condition of the lock."

Most locks have either hydraulic or electric operating



**James Nelson, (standing), lockmaster, Nickajack Lock and Mildred Cabaniss (seated), budget technician, Lenoir City Area Office, talk about the Nickajack Lock's budget for the next fiscal year.**



# ues Tradition of Service

systems. Nickajack is unique in its operating mechanisms.

"This lock is unique in that it has electrically operated gates and hydraulically operated valves," said Nelson. "Each valve has its own power unit and hydraulic tank whereas most locks are designed to have hydraulic oil pumped around the lock from one central pump. Some locks in the District are being modified to install separate power units and hydraulic pumps because if one valve goes out the rest can operate independently."

There is a close relationship between the lock and the local community. Most of the employees of the lock are from the area and are involved in local activities. Many people will call to see when a tow is coming through, especially when it is a boat like the Delta Queen, according to Hudson.

"We get quite a few visitors here," said Nelson. "We are just three miles off the Interstate and there are signs on the Highway for us. A lot of times people crossing the Interstate river bridge can see a tow heading for us, and they come by. We also get a lot of school groups through here, and I go out and make presentations at schools about navigation and water safety."

One person who does double duty at the lock is actually assigned somewhere else. Mildred Cabaniss, budget technician, Lenoir City Area Office, works at Nickajack although being assigned to the area office. She not only keeps the budget for five locks but also helps Nickajack with admin support.

"I help the guys out here when I can," said Cabaniss. "If they need anything typed I do that, of course answer the phone

and help with CEFMS problems, but I mainly help them and the other projects in the area with their budgets."

Cabaniss oversees a budget of about \$3 million for the Area Office. She processes contracts up to \$25,000 for Operations Manager, Tom Hood, purchases supplies and equipment for the Area and processes VISA checks.

"This is a great bunch of guys to work with and the scenery is beautiful," said Cabaniss. "I love my job and love working here at Nickajack." □

**Right: Floyd Hudson, lock operator, Nickajack Lock, operates the lock in order for maintenance personnel to perform monthly maintenance on the gates. The lock operators work closely with the maintenance personnel ensure that monthly preventative maintenance is performed.**



**A six barge tow locks through the 600-foot auxiliary lock at Nickajack Lock. Designed and constructed as the auxiliary lock, it is the only useable chamber at Nickajack since the 800-foot main lock was never completed.**

# District Realty Specialist Answers Call and Becomes a Novelist

Story and Photos by Bill Peoples

*Diane Danay thinks she has it all – high level corporate position, a glitzy Manhattan apartment, an expensive sports car, and an adoring boy friend. She is gloriously happy. But, a fortuitous visit from her cousins changes everything.*

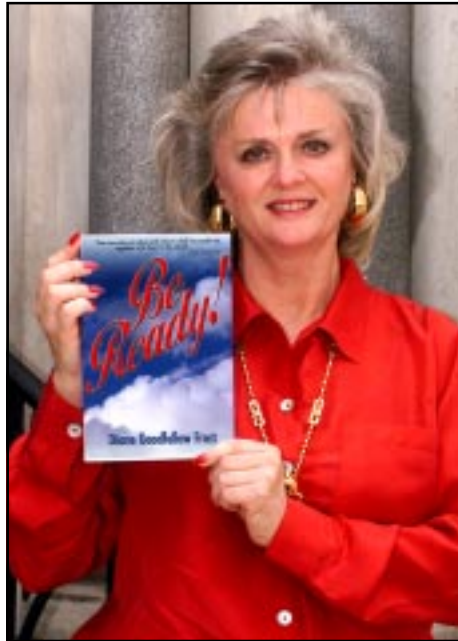
**D**iane Frost, realty specialist, Real Estate Division, knows Diane Danay very well in fact they are quite similar according to the author who created Diane Danay as the main character in the new Christian novel, *Be Ready!*, especially since the author happens to be Frost.

Frost recently joined the ranks of authors with *Be Ready!* The novel is Frost's first book, which she wrote over a two month period in 1997 and then began the long journey to actually have it published.

"It is a very good book," said Carol Warren, executive officer, Nashville District, and one of Frost's best friends who also helped edit the book. "It is an inspiration to other people. I know what Diane wants is to happen with this book is for people will read it and it will make a change in their lives. She wants people to realize what is really important in life: family, love, God and where you are going in the next life, not where you are going in the corporate world today."

"This book was a call from God," said Frost. "It's just the way it was. Back in 1996, I had a vision that I talk about in the book. It just kept coming back to me and I knew that He wanted me to write the book and it was about the end times.

"One morning at 2:30 I woke straight up out of bed, and I heard 'Do what I told you to do.' I knew I had to write this book, but I said to the Lord 'I have five kids, and I'm working a full-time job that is 12 hours with commuting included, and I help my husband with his business. I sat down and put in the paper in a word processor since I didn't have a computer then, and here it came. I typed and typed and it was



**Diane Frost holds her new book *Be Ready!*, a Christian fiction novel, that challenges readers to think about their priorities.**

about 582 double-spaced pages. It took me two months. I took four days of leave and the rest I wrote on nights and weekends."

Authors write books for many reasons, Frost admits this book was written for a purpose and hopes that it is successful, not just to generate sales but change lives.

"People from ages 12 to 93 are presently reading this book who I know of and are being witnessed to in one way or another," said Frost. "Because God called me to write it, I know He wants it in as many hands as possible to speak to those people. It is not because of sales. Sure I'd like to sell a million copies because it would mean that million people are reading this book so it can speak to them."

Most million-seller books are carefully researched, and the author plans and outlines the book before beginning to write.

"I started to outline, but it was no use, because the words were pouring from my fingertips onto the paper, I didn't need an outline," said Frost. "I just sat down and

typed the whole novel. Then it took me about a year to edit, and I had to make sure that the characters were consistent since they connect all through the book. I knew what Scriptures God wanted me to use and my husband, Carl, helped me look up the verses so we could reference them in the book."

After Frost wrote the book in two months and spent about a year editing, it was time to find a publisher.

"I sent it to five or six publishers, who were looking for Christian fiction," said Frost. "All my responses were no, but the bottom-line was no one ever read it. They would want the first chapter or chapters one to three. Even though I got rejections, I was never discouraged. God told me to write it, and I knew it would go."

Even though she faced rejections, Frost was determined to find away to get the book published and continued to look for a publisher.

"I never thought that I would self-publish," said Frost. "I knew of Providence House, because they published *Miss Daisy's Cookbook* and had contacted my husband about his seasoning, because it is a Tennessee product. They put one of his recipes in the book and we had visited them to buy copies of the cookbook. I took my manuscript down there and said 'I'd like for you to look at this.' Their associate publisher was resting at home due to back problems, but they called her to see if she wanted to read it and she did. She read the entire novel and sent me a contract. She told me 'this needs to be published,' but I didn't have the money."

After about six months, Frost put the money together. "It is amazing what you can do or what avenues you realize are open when you are on a mission! If you know you are suppose to do something, you can do it! I contacted my publisher and said 'I'm ready to go.' I signed the contract last December and it was out within seven months. I stayed with a publishing house even though it cost me more, because it gives me more ability to

**Continued on next page**



## Continued from Page 10

get out into the market because they do a lot of legwork for you. They did a fantastic job.”

For the first printing, 5,000 copies were published. “*Be Ready!*” is available through Amazon.com, and Barnesandnoble.com. Frost plans on it being carried by Books-A-Million and it is already in several of their stores. Presently, more bookstores are still being contacted as the book was just released in July.

### Invest in People

If you think you might have a book inside you waiting to be written, then you might want to take some advice from new author, Frost, “I’d tell an author-to-be that even though they say ‘It’s almost impossible.’ It is not impossible! There is a way. I didn’t do this, but you can have it printed yourself. One thing I’d advise is to buy a computer before you start. I did my book on a word processor and later got a computer. I ended up scanning the whole book, page by page, in order to get it on my computer for editing and that was time-consuming. There are many people who want to write a book, and they go through their whole life and never do it. I’d say ‘go for it.’ Don’t wait around.”



Several co-workers and friends of Diane Frost gave her a book debut and autograph party to celebrate the publishing of *Be Ready!* Left to right standing and holding copies of the new novel are: Misty Stanfield, Yvonne Hamilton, Hope Hamilton, Shirley Overby, Carol Denny, Janie Billingsley, and Donna Davis; seated is new author, Diane Frost.

Now that Frost has her first book under her belt, what is next for the realty specialist turned author?

“I do have other books I want to write,” said Frost. “I put one together about three years ago. It has sixty color pictures of places and people in Tennessee and brings to heart the things you may reminisce about and love about this state. It’s a coffee table type book with a story, poem or maybe just a title with each picture. I also have another book that God wants me to do, and it’s totally different from this novel. The idea came to me while I was writing *Be Ready!* It takes place in Mississippi, but I know I’m going to have to go down there and do some research before I write it. Right now though, I have to work at marketing this book and get some exposure for it. I am planning to do some book signings and try to get on some talk shows. The publishing house has told me that the people who are the most successful sell their book themselves.”

Frost says the biggest lesson she learned from writing *Be Ready!* is to do what God tells you to do.

“She totally believes the book was sent to her by God to get the message out and to help others in their struggle with their faith,” said Warren.

“In the book there is a lot of busy, every day life things going on and a lot of long work hours, but the main character realizes that those things are not the most important things in her life, but that God, family and love for others are the most important. I would highly recommend that everyone go buy *Be Ready!* and read it.” □

## Thoughts from the Trail

### Continued from Page 3

outstanding work hosting the 50th anniversary celebration of the Wolf Creek project. I received several comments from folks who attended the activities, all of which were very positive. As you might expect, the 1,300-plus attendees were not only impressed by the magnitude of Wolf Creek, but also by the project’s condition. This is a great testimony to the work performed by our hydropower and natural resources staffs at Wolf Creek. In particular, I’d like to recognize the efforts of Ranger Troy Hawks who planned much of the celebration activities. For the entire Wolf Creek team, what you’re doing gets noticed and, more importantly, it’s appreciated. Well done.

Several upcoming events in the District that I’d like to call your attention to include shoreline cleanups scheduled for Cheatham, J. Percy Priest, Martins Fork, and Old Hickory in mid-September as part of National Public Lands Day on Sept. 23. Mike Patterson, Bill Colvin, Bill Jackson, and Carl Crews are soliciting volunteers to help with the cleanup at their projects—it should be fun and, more importantly, it’s a worthwhile venture. I encourage you to participate if your schedule permits.

A few other folks who deserve recognition for their contributions over the past month include Jay Sadler, Grady Moore, Don Fulcher, Doug Radley, Vince Greer, Tim Higgs, Phillip Jones, and Tom Pirkle. This team rose to the occasion and cleared all the hurdles so that we could sign a project cooperation agreement and conduct a groundbreaking ceremony for the first of many Section 531 Environmental projects in eastern-Kentucky. This was an important milestone since we’d struggled for more than a year to complete this agreement. Two other stalwarts I’d like to mention are Linda Adcock and Tommy Haskins, both from Planning Branch. Linda and Tommy achieved milestones in their Oak Grove and Lawrenceburg projects when we signed our first feasibility cost share agreements for these projects several weeks ago. Thanks Tommy and Linda.

Well, I’ve about reached my page limit for this edition. Until next month, keep safety foremost in your minds, take care of each other, and “lead the way, Nashville.” □

# Wheeler Lock Home to Three Female Lock Operators

by Bill Peoples

This is Wheeler Lock to the down bound tow on Channel 13, over," says a female voice.

"This is the Johnathan Golding," a male voice responds.

"Roger, roger, how are you, just checking to see who was up there. We are just finishing the second cut on the M/V Bob Labon and should have him out of here in an hour or so. You just need to pal around up there until we are finished with him," came back the female voice.

"Roger that, we just hold it up here for your signal. Stewart out," the captain responds.

"Roger, roger, skipper, see you then," says the female voice.

If you locked through Wheeler Lock in the last seven months, you had a 60 percent chance of hearing a female lock operator's voice giving you directions, which is highly unusual. Since January, there have been three female operators at Wheeler Lock: Helen Jeffreys, Marsha Holder and Joyce Benjamin. Jeffreys and Holder have been in the District 22 and 20 years respectively. Benjamin graduated from the lock operator's training program in December and was assigned temporarily to Wheeler.

## Invest in People

Currently there are four female lock operators in the Nashville District: the three at Wheeler, one at Pickwick Lock and one female lockmaster at Cheatham Lock.

"You know it's interesting that right now we do have three female lock operators, Joyce, Helen and I at the same lock, but we aren't special we do our job just like the guys," said Holder. "It takes a team to operate a lock and we have a very good team here at Wheeler. Gary Bowling, our lockmaster, is great and treats everyone the same and the other operators, Keith Horton, Tony Hendon and Richard Burney are also great."

Whether you are a male or female operator if you have been on the job a long time you develop relationships with



Photos by Bill Peoples

**Helen Jeffreys (left photo), Marsha Holder (center), and Joyce Benjamin (right), are three of the five lock operators assigned to Wheeler Lock and responsible for safely locking both commercial tows and pleasure boats through the lock.**

the towboat personnel who routinely pass through your lock.

"There are still some boats coming through that were coming through when I first started operating the lock 18 years ago," said Helen Jeffreys. "I've seen some crew that started as deckhands who are now captains or pilots. You do get to know some of them, especially the captains of the boats."

The reaction to a female voice on the radio when calling Wheeler Lock varies with the type of craft, according to Benjamin.

"A lot of times they are surprised to hear a female voice, especially the pleasure craft operators," said Jeffreys. "The towboats are used to it, because we've been here awhile, but the recreational users are sometimes caught off guard."

"Some say they like to hear a woman's voice," said Holder. "They get out here on the river for month at time and do say it is nice to hear a woman's voice. Some of these young guys on these towboats, deckhands, it's the first time they have been away from home and Helen and I are like mothers to them. We give them advice on their girlfriends and all kinds of things. Some of them call Helen grandma. This one kid the other day asked where 'Grandma' was."

Jeffreys and Holder have been at Wheeler a long time and each have developed their unique touches that may boost morale a little for the deckhands,

according to Benjamin, who says she hasn't developed a trademark yet.

"Marsha gives them candy a lot of times," said Benjamin. "She'll bring a big bag of candy, and Helen saves her milk jugs and fixes them ice water. Sometimes, we have extra things from the garden we give out, too. I gave out a couple jars of homemade blackberry jam."

If you are a lock operator for very long, you will have something interesting, things happen to you, according to Jeffreys.

"They have had some interesting experiences, both Helen and Marsha have had deckhands fall overboard while they were on duty, but neither of them were seriously hurt," said Benjamin. "We are just like any operators. We try to make sure people do things safely. If they are new, especially the pleasure craft operators and green deckhands, I'll walk them through the procedures, but most of the towboats you don't have to worry about."

August is Women's Equality Month. Being a female in what was once a traditionally male job is changing. Jeffreys a 22-year Corps veteran and Benjamin, with the Corps five years had different perspectives.

"When I first started, 22 years ago, I was one of three females hired as laborers," said Jeffreys. "There was some resistance, but you got use to it. I think you had to prove yourself just like the

**Continued on next page**



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guys did. I did a lot of work I'd never done before like jack hammering. When I got to be a lock operator, 18 years ago, there was one other female, and she was at Kentucky Lock. I've never had any problems here at the lock."

"I was a journeyman sheet metal worker and maintenance worker for 20 years in upstate New York, before moving here and getting a job with the Corps five years ago," said Benjamin. "When I started 20-25 years ago there was a lot of harassment and animosity, but I have never felt that with the Corps either as a maintenance worker or now as a lock operator. I think men now are more use to working with females and respect us more. This is the best and most satisfying job I've ever had. I love it."

Jeffreys, Holder, and Benjamin all expressed the same thing when talking about being a lock operator: that they loved being a lock operator, especially at Wheeler Lock, and the only bad thing is the shift work.

"I think this is a great job," said Holder. "I wish some of my nieces would get on this, I love it. I have thirteen nieces and seems every one of them wants to get married as soon as they get out of high school and go into nursing or teaching. I think it is more difficult if you have a family, whether you are male or female; the shift work is harder on families. For a single person, I'd say go for it, but there aren't many openings since most of us who get into it don't want to leave. People ask me how do they get my job, and I tell them that it will be hard."

Soon there will not be three female lock operators at Wheeler, Benjamin will be moving to a permanent assignment at another lock, but she said she has learned a lot from the team members at Wheeler.

"If I have a question I can always ask Gary Bowling, our lockmaster, but Helen and I have become very close and once or twice I've called her at home," said Benjamin. "I think Helen is one of best operators in District, that is my personal opinion. She has done just about everything here that a lock operator might be expected to do, and I think she is very respected by everyone around here, co-workers and the crews of the towboats. Regretfully, I'll be leaving here soon, and everyone here has been great. I've really enjoyed working here." □

# Library Meets Recent Reference Requests

by James Siburt, District Librarian

Periodically I like to devote this column to a discussion of recent reference requests received in the Library that were particularly challenging or unusual while demonstrating problem solving skills. These requests involved a variety of subjects and the use of different methods to arrive at the resulting information. As one might expect, most required electronic searching, but the most unusual, and most satisfying, depended upon the art of listening and asking questions.

The first request came from an engineer who was in the process of completing the final version of a technical report. She asked if there was a standard format for citing bibliographical references. I began by checking recent reports released in a paper format, then checked several studies that are available in electronic version only. Reviewing these reports revealed a variety of formats, with one newly released report not complying with any standard format at all. From these results, I determined to find a source for the requestor.

As the engineer was particularly interested in how to cite Internet references, I performed a search which located the St. Martins Press website <http://www.bedfordsmartins.com/online/>. This site contains an electronic book entitled Online: a reference guide to using Internet sources. Covered are all the major citation reference standards including the well-known Turabian's or Chicago Manual of Style. A few weeks later this research assisted another engineer with the same requirement.

A request for a foreign publication on environmental fate and ecosystem contaminants presented a different problem. First the title identified it as a "Planning Document," raising the issue that it might be either unpublished or proprietary. The second difficulty was locating the publisher, *Nederlandse Organisatie voo Toegepast Natuurwetenschappelijk Onderzoek*. When initial OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) and Internet searches

failed, I determined to translate the publishers' name from the Flemish spelling. I was able to find a language translator site on the Internet, and from it learned the publisher was the Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research. From that I was able to find their website <http://utopia.tno.nl> and, unable to find the report among their electronic publications, sent them an email requesting the paper. Within twenty-four hours, TNO, an adjunct of the Dutch government, faxed the document to our location.

The final request is among the most unusual I've fielded over the years. I received a phone call from an Indiana resident who was researching her great-grandfather. She stated he was a civil engineer and had come to Tennessee in 1941 to an Army installation, which she believed to be the Nashville District. I didn't recall ever seeing his name in any report or organization chart, but with his arrival coinciding with the beginning of construction at Wolf Creek, Dale Hollow and Center Hill Dams, plus our World War II military mission, I didn't dismiss the possibility. After a number of questions to attempt to define his duty station, the young woman mentioned a place name that failed to match any District work site. I then asked her for any information she could tell me about her relative.

From her replies, I was able to fill in many details and suggest further avenues for research. Her great-grandfather, as it turned out, was a World War I veteran, victimized physically by mustard gas and mentally by shell shock. His coming to Tennessee was to receive treatment at a Veterans Center, where he also obtained employment. After release, he relocated to the Rocky Mountain region, presumably to aid his ravaged lungs. I provided her with the names, addresses and phone numbers of several agencies to check for records relating to his military service and subsequent treatment of his war wounds. This request required a combination of problem identification, research skills and historical expertise, and the circumstances of this request made the results most satisfying. □

# The Corps Crowd

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## **Congratulations to ...**

... Michael Zoccola, assistant chief, Engineering Division, and his wife, Darlene; their son, Matt was a recent recipient of the Donelson-Hermitage Chamber of Commerce "Student of the Year" Award for the 1999-2000 school year. The award is based on scholastic accomplishment, leadership and citizenship qualities, and extra curricula activities. Matt was an eighth grader at Holy Rosary Academy and will be a freshman at Father Ryan this fall.

... Spencer Huddleston, son of Wayne Huddleston, Planning, Programs, and Project Management Division, and classmate, Mike Hood, placed first in the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) statewide Competition in the category of "business partnerships." Both sophomores at Beech High School, Hendersonville, Tenn., the students worked with a local firm, Smith Travel Research, to develop an Internet web-site for the company. They traveled to Long Beach, Calif., to compete at the National FBLA Conference. Spencer was also recipient of the Hugh O'Brien Youth (HOBY) Leadership award from Beech High School. HOBY recipients from High Schools across the nation attend a three-day summer retreat in their state with statewide business leaders.

... Leila Hejazi, daughter of Linda Ingram, Environmental Restoration Branch, Engineering Division, was selected to attend the Hugh O'Brien Youth (HOBY) Leadership conference as the outstanding sophomore from Mt. Juliet High School. Leila was also a member of the Future Problem Solving Team from Mt. Juliet, which placed first in the State, senior division, and competed at the University of Georgia in the National Competition.

## **Farewell to ...**

... Jennifer Robertson, office automation clerk, Laurel River Lake Resource Office. Robertson will be moving to Cookeville, Tenn., to begin graduate school and transferring to the Dale Hollow Power Plant.

... Farewell to Jeff Maxey, construction inspector, Dale Hollow Resource Office, who transferred to the Little Rock District.

## **Welcome to ...**

... Heather Kluempke, student aide, Laurel River Lake Resource Office. She is a recent graduate of North Laurel High School and began her college studies at Somerset Community College, London, Ky.

... Leslie Williams, new office assistant at the Old Hickory Power Plant. She was an inspector at the Dale Hollow Resource Office.

## **Wedding Bells for ...**

... Timothy McCleskey, Jr., son of Timothy McCleskey, Sr. and Shirlee McCleskey, who married Parriss Carolyn Jones on July 29, in Nashville, Tenn., at the Schrader Lane Church of Christ. Timothy McCleskey, Sr. officiated over the wedding ceremony.

... Leslie (Carter) Williams, inspector, Dale Hollow Resource Office, and Harold Williams, senior mechanic, Dale Hollow Power Plant, upon their marriage on May 26.

... Dalton McCrary, engineering technician, Design Branch, upon his marriage to Kelly Whitworth on April 22.

## **New Baby Brigade ...**

... Abdulnasir Farah, mechanic A at Cheatham Power Plant, and his wife, Rahma Bulle, who gave birth to a baby girl, Halima Farah on Feb 20.

... Ken Scott, park ranger at Lake Barkley, and his wife, Lori, on the birth of their son, Seth Ross Scott. Seth was born June 27, and weighed 9 pounds and 4 ounces.

## **Sympathy to...**

... the family of Albert Dunn, Sr., natural disaster specialist, Readiness Branch, upon his passing away on Aug. 5. He was a dedicated team member of the District and will be missed. □

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## **Training**

### **Continued From Page 5**

supervisor, are able to have the District fund those courses which relate to your job and then you pick up the tab for those that do not. For instance, if I have an engineer who goes back to school and takes individual engineering courses, which enable him or her to do a better job, then I get a better engineer. If those courses, which we fund and some others that the individual funds earns him or her a degree, then it is a win/win for both, plus the District has not incurred expenses for travel or labor since these courses have been taken on the individual's time."

In the past couple of years, the District has had funds left over in its Training Budget, according to Rossi. This year, as last year, the Training Committee put out a

second request for people interested in tuition assistance since they had funds remaining after the training survey and allocations.

"We asked people a second time again this year about tuition assistance because we do believe this is a great program for our employees," said Rossi. "The bottom-line is that individuals have to work with their supervisors to make this program work."

Training starts with individuals as they plan their career development and identify their training needs through the IDP, which is a living document according to Rossi. Supervisors must be involved to review and validate training for all their employees and to make sure it is made available equitably, and the Training Committee oversees the process to make sure overall

District training goals are met.

"I cannot over emphasize, the responsibility the individual employee has in meeting his or her training needs," said Waters. "You are the first and primary person in the chain responsible for your professional development. It starts with evaluating your career goals and needs and then communicating with your supervisor. The Training Committee validates the training requirements of each division or office, ensures that overall District needs are met, and approves the funding allocations each year. Managers and supervisors are then responsible for executing the program. The system works well when everyone communicates and works towards enhancing individual and District performance through training." □



## Cross Creeks

### Continued From Page 4

habitat conducive to waterfowl management. If the stream bank erosion were allowed to continue unchecked, 4,100 acres of wetlands and bottomland hardwoods would be lost including a bald eagle nesting habitat, according to Syriopoulou.

About 90 percent of the construction work has been completed. Stone placement on one more archeological site, which should cost less than \$1 million, will complete the project next year, according to Syriopoulou.

"We should be proud of what we have accomplished," said Syriopoulou. "Many people have contributed to making this project so successful and moving it ahead of schedule. From the people in Contracting who worked on the requirements contract, to the Geotechnical team members who did the engineering during construction, to the construction representatives in the field, to contractor and the customer, it took all these people working together to make the project a success." □

## Mark Your Calendars

The date is set. First Baptist Church's Fellowship Hall on Tuesday, Dec. 12, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. will be the site of the District's Annual Christmas Luncheon and Play. Stephanie Coleman is beginning to write this year's play and is eyeing potential "actors and actresses." □

## Armed Forces Vacation Club

Something that may be of interest to employees is the Armed Forces Vacation Club, from the LRD's Human Resources Bulletin. A week costs \$209 at available (generally off season) vacation resorts. This was a pilot program, but has been expanded to include availability to Army uniform and civilian personnel. Some resorts, generally remote ones and overseas, have an all-inclusive package that will add to the costs. The site is <http://www.afvclub.com>. □

# Calendar

## September

Autumn Month, Baby Safety Month, Children's Eye Health and Safety Month, Classical Music Month, Library Card Sign-Up Month, Read-A-New-Book Month, Emergency Care Month, Be Kind To Editors and Writers Month, National Sight Saving Month, National Honey Month, National Literacy Month, National Cholesterol Education and Awareness Month, Be Kind to Writers and Editors Month, National Courtesy Month, National School Success Month, National Hispanic Heritage Month (Sep 15-Oct 15).

15	Mayflower departs from Plymouth, England with 102 pilgrims, 1620
18	U.S. Voyager I takes first photograph of Earth and Moon together, 1977
23	National Public Lands Day, with activities at Old Hickory Lake, J.Percy Pries Lake, Cheatham Lake, and Martin's Fork Lake
28	U.S. Congress sends Constitution to state legislatures for their approval, 1787

## October

Adopt-A-Pet Month, Campaign for Healthier Babies Month, Computer Learning Month, Country Music Month, Crime Prevention Month, Co-Op Awareness Month, Domestic Violence Month, Energy Awareness Month, Fire Prevention Month, Hunger Awareness Month, National Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Awareness Month, Spina Bifida Month

1	Inauguration of NASA, 1958
5	Battle of Allatoona, one-third of Union troops die repulsing the South, 1864
9	Public admitted to Washington Monument, 1888
13	U.S. Navy established, 1775
18	Retiree Luncheon, 12 p.m., Picadilly's Cafeteria, Madison, Tenn.

Information for the October calendar must be received in the Public Affairs Office by Sept. 15. Please send email to [William.L.Peoples@usace.army.mil](mailto:William.L.Peoples@usace.army.mil). Information on events and activities of interest to all District employees is requested from the staff and the field.

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# Civilian Benefits to be Handled on Web or by Phone

by Barbara Filbert  
*Army News Service*

Civilian employees can now change their health insurance and other benefits over the phone or online as personnel offices transfer many services to a call center at Fort Riley, Kan.

The Army Benefits Center for Civilians, or ABC-C, located at Riley, began providing automated benefit services to the Army National Capital Region on May 8.

The Center opened for employees in the Southwest and North Central Regions earlier this year and already services about 47,000 Army civilians. With addition of the National Capital Region, it will add to its service area more than 20,000 employees working in the District of Columbia, southern Maryland and northern Virginia.

The other four stateside regions will open in monthly intervals, ending with the Northeast Region standing up in late October, officials said.

Army personnel officials expect the program to reduce workloads for Civilian Personnel Advisory Centers and at the same time ensure employees receive standardized guidance on personnel matters from trained counselors.

The ABC-C is an effort to maximize the use of technology and promote efficiency through the consolidation of resources, personnel officials said. It uses state-of-

the-art technology similar to automated systems used by banks, colleges and health insurance carriers, and offers two ways to access information and process transactions.

The Interactive Voice Response System allows customers to access the system through a touch-tone telephone; the Employee Benefit Information System, a customized Web application, allows customers to access the system through the Internet. Employees may use either system from any location to access personal and general information, and process transactions regarding retirement, life insurance, health benefits, survivor benefits, and the Thrift Savings Plan. If assistance is necessary, Web users can transfer to a benefits counselor.

## Revolutionize Effectiveness

ABC-C replaces the old way of doing personnel business, where employees often made trips to the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center to make changes to their benefits. Most transactions will be processed overnight, and personnel can verify their transactions by revisiting the automated systems or checking their Leave and Earnings Statement.

"Our goal is to give the civilian work force quality and timely customer service," said Kathy Cole, chief of the ABC-C. "The

center streamlines the benefits and entitlements function, eliminates manual processes, and assists us in providing better and more convenient service to our customers."

The Web application has the same transaction capability as the call center, but the Web page offers a fast, convenient and easy-to-use application with features not available through the call center, Cole added. A major advantage to using the Web application is the ability to navigate to the different programs, receive more detailed information, and process the same transactions as over the telephone.

Both systems are available seven days a week, 21 hours a day, and will be down from midnight-3 a.m., central time, for systems maintenance. Benefits counselors will be available Monday-Friday, 7a.m. - 5 p.m. central time.

Personnel can access the Web application at <http://www.abc.army.mil>; and the call center with a touch-tone telephone by calling the toll-free number 1-877-ARMY-CTR (1-877-276-9287). Employees will need to input their Social Security Number and personnel identification number (PIN) to access both systems.

(Editor's note: Barbara Filbert works at the Civilian Personnel Operations Center Management Agency at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.) □